



Press Release

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Germany: Four million households switch energy provider

Findings of GfK EnergyTracking for the first half of 2011

Nuremberg, August 17, 2011 – In the first half of 2011, around 4.5 million households in Germany switched energy supplier. These are the findings from the new panel survey GfK EnergyTracking, which investigates consumers' supplier changing behavior in the electricity and gas markets on a monthly basis.

According to the survey, consumers' affinity to switch suppliers is significantly more pronounced for electricity than gas. Since the liberalization of the electricity and gas markets, competition to win favor with consumers has become much more intense, and is today primarily carried out via the internet. The competitive environment has fundamentally changed; entry barriers have dropped and pricing battles are increasingly determining the market.

The consequences of this are extremely positive for consumers as they have the freedom to choose from a wide range of different suppliers, pricing models and tariff options. The findings of the GfK EnergyTracking consumer panel, which was launched at the beginning of 2011, show that consumers now take full advantage of the opportunities to change. In this respect, switching to a completely new supplier seems to be far more appealing for many energy customers than simply swapping to a different tariff.

At present, those tariffs that offer a fixed energy price for a certain length of time are especially popular. Around 70% of consumers who switched in the first half of 2011 opted for a fixed-price tariff of up to 12 months. In addition, numerous energy suppliers offered switchover bonuses; more than half of all energy consumers received a one-off bonus in euros when they changed supplier.

Price is not always the only argument

When competing for customers, it is not only the price that counts. A change in consumers' motivations for switching became especially evident following the nuclear crisis in Japan. After the disaster, green power tariffs, in particular, experienced a sharp surge, although the latest data suggest

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this will not necessarily be sustainable. The characteristic consumer switching to green energy is under the age of 39, has an above-average salary, is more likely to live in a city and extensively researches different tariffs and suppliers before making a final decision.

Here, specifically smaller suppliers with a focus on green energy can benefit, and have already registered both greater consumer perception and an increase in the number of new contracts. In contrast, large and established energy suppliers are struggling with image problems and above all, major corporations have reported an exodus of private customers in recent months.

Internet is the number one information source

When researching the best supplier, the internet has emerged as the number one information source. One in two customers making a switch look first at energy portals and suppliers' websites for information. However, the internet is not only an information platform, as two thirds of switchover contracts are completed directly with the new provider online. In addition, tariff calculators make it much easier to switch: enter an energy consumption estimate and the postcode, and the system generates a selection of the cheapest suppliers.

Usage time of tariff comparison portals with the greatest reach	Average usage time per user in minutes in second quarter of 2011
verivox.de	17.5
check24.de	13.8
wechseln.de	8.0
stromvergleich.de	6.6
toptarif.de	6.5
strom-magazin.de	5.9
energievergleich.de	3.8
energieportal24.de	3.4
stromauskunft.de	2.8
tarifcheck24.com	2.7

Source: GfK EnergyTracking/GfK Media Efficiency Panel – private internet consumption

They survey

Since January 1, 2011, GfK Panel Services has been conducting monthly interviews with 20,000 households on their behavior in the electricity and gas market in Germany in terms of made or planned supplier and contract changes. In addition, GfK can combine GfK EnergyTracking with information from the GfK Media Efficiency Panel on the complete media usage behavior of consumers and with individual target groups.



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